

1903 ROSEN BACH The Influence of the „Celestina“ in the Early English Drama

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# The Influence of the „Celestina“ In the Early English Drama

By

**Abraham S. Wolf Rosenbach**

Reprinted from the «Jahrbuch der Deutschen Shakespeare-Gesellschaft»,  
Neununddreißigster Jahrgang, 1903.

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«The Influence of the “Celestina” in the Early English Drama» is a portion of a thesis entitled «The Influence of Spanish Literature in the Elizabethan and Stuart Drama» presented in June, 1901 to the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Pennsylvania in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. I wish to acknowledge my indebtedness to Professor Felix E. Schelling for valuable suggestions and assistance.



# The Influence of „The Celestina“ in the Early English Drama.

By

**A. S. W. Rosenbach** (Philadelphia, Pa.).

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At the beginning of the Sixteenth Century the moral interlude, with its ringing exhortations to virtue, its rough wit and trenchant buffoonery, was at the height of its development in England. It was at this time that there was published in Spain the tragi-comedy, the «Celestina», a dramatic composition that influenced and moulded the dramatic art not only of the Peninsula, but of Italy, France, Germany and England. The channels of communication between the countries of Europe were not many and yet the «Celestina» trespassed all bounds of travel and exerted its virile influence deep into the fabric of continental literature. A few decades after its appearance in Spain, it had been given a new birth in England, there to be read and presented upon the stage for more than a century. The interlude of «Calisto and Melibea» not only remains the monument of the first literary contact of England with Castile, but it is the first play that was indebted to the literature of Spain for its plot and romantic setting.

The exact date of the first appearance in print of the «Celestina» has not been definitely determined. It was issued just before the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, probably in 1499. The fact that the Heber copy bore upon its colophon the legend, «*Nihil sine causa, 1499, F. A. de Basilia*» led many to the conclusion that this was the *editio princeps*, no other exemplaire of it or of an earlier edition being known. This so-called first Burgos issue is, at the present writing, quite inaccessible. The last we hear of it is its brief appearance in

one of the book catalogues<sup>1)</sup> of the late Mr. Bernard Quaritch. It has been noticed that the paper of the last page of this edition of the «*Celestina*» contains the water-mark, 1795.<sup>2)</sup> As the Heber copy is described as lacking the title-leaf, perhaps some ingenious craftsman attempted to supply the page containing the place and date of publication, which was probably also missing when it came into his hands.

In a recent number of the *Revue Hispanique* there is an iconoclastic article upon the «*Celestina*» by M. R. Foulché-Delbosc.<sup>3)</sup> He ventures the theory, and it is well grounded, that there are three early states of the great Spanish play, — the first edition of which no copy is known; the second, '*Con sus argumentos neuamente anadidos*' is preserved in the Heber copy that lacks the first and last pages; and the third, containing the extra furbishings — '*el autor a un su amigo*', *argumento* and six *octavos* by Alonzo de Proaza (Edition of Seville, 1501).

The above early editions of the «*Celestina*» were in sixteen acts. In 1502 there appeared in Seville one of twenty-one acts, which became the definitive number of acts, although later a bold but unworthy spirit added another.

The authorship of the «*Celestina*» like the date of its first issue, remains shrouded in mystery. The author (if it indeed be he) modestly reveals himself in an acrostic prefixed to the play. Taking the first letter of each verse we discover that '*El Bachiller Fernando de Rojas acabo la comedia de Calisto y Melibea e fue nascido en la Puebla de Montalvan.*' In the apology for writing the «*Celestina*» (*el autor a un su amigo*) Rojas states that the first act had been written by either Juan de Mena or Rodrigo Cota. Rojas enjoyed reading this very much, — he liked the elegant style, the pointed wit, and the depth of thought displayed by the author, and he had, after some hesitation, been tempted to write a continuation, which he did in a fortnight of his vacation.

It has been thought that the reference to Mena and Cota was a mere blind, and that Rojas was the author of the full complement of acts. Others think that either Mena or Cota wrote the first act and

<sup>1)</sup> *Bibliotheca Hispana*, London, February, 1895.

<sup>2)</sup> See '*Manuel du libraire*'. Jacques-Charles Brunet, 5th Edition, Paris 1860; c. 1715 ff. The Heber copy, as last described, began on leaf a, ii, with the words, '*argumento del primo auto desta comedia.*'

<sup>3)</sup> *Observations sur la Celestine*. *Rev. Hisp.* Nos. 21, 22, 1900.

that Rojas finished it «with an ambrosial air that can never be enough valued».<sup>1)</sup> If Rojas is not responsible for all of the *Celestina*, to Cota, according to the critics, and not Mena, must be attributed the first act. M. Foulché-Delbosc thinks that even Rojas himself is a myth, a literary phantom that served to shield the true author of the *Celestina*. «Qui est ce Fernando de Rojas?» asks M. Foulché-Delbosc, «né à Montalvan, où a-t-il vécu, qu'a-t-il fait, qu'a-t-il écrit, où et quand est-il mort, autant de questions auxquelles on serait bien en peine de répondre.» As nothing is known of Rojas beyond the verses prefixed to the *Celestina* and the brief notice in the *«Historia de Telavera»*, the conclusion is reached that the sixteen acts are the work of a single author. — this author is unknown. It is entirely foreign to the successive additions that have been made to it.<sup>2)</sup> The author of the article in the *Revue Hispanique* has presented us with a brilliant argument, but has he proved his point? He neglects the evidence of Alonzo de Villegas, who states that Cota began the *Celestina* and that Rojas finished it «with an ambrosial air», etc. The *«Selvagia»* was published in 1554, a little over half a century after the *«Celestina»* was issued. If Blanco White is correct, that it was written after the siege of Granada, then another decade might be added. The lines to the *«Selvagia»* are, therefore, not the work of a contemporary, but of one who imitated and admired the *«Celestina»* and who, one would think, would be sufficiently interested to verify or deny the assertion that Rojas was the author. He could have inquired of some of the older people, who were contemporary with Rojas, and they would have been able to have informed him accurately upon the question at issue. If the adaptors, translators, imitators — and their name is legion —, accepted his authorship of the *«Celestina»*, more evidence than the merely negative and destructive criticism of M. Foulché-Delbosc must be forthcoming. It is pleasant to think that after writing the *«Celestina»*, Rojas, with the feeling that he had wrought an enduring work, modestly retired to his home, gave up the labors of his pen, and enjoyed a well-merited rest.

The success of the *«Celestina»* was unprecedented. Edition after

<sup>1)</sup> See Alonzo de Villegas in his *Selvagia*, 1554; cf. Ticknor (Boston, 1866) Vol. I, p. 235. Germond de Lavigne, Blanco White, Wolf, Menéndez y Pelayo, Butler Clarke and Fitzmaurice-Kelly think that Rojas is the sole author; Aribau, Lemcke, Amador de los Ríos, Amarita and Ticknor are of the opinion that there are two authors, Rojas and the writer of the first act.

<sup>2)</sup> Foulché-Delbosc, pp. 36—46; p. 60.

edition was issued, no less than seventeen, without counting apocryphal ones, being printed before 1530.<sup>1)</sup> Five years after its appearance it was translated into Italian, and renderings in French, German and English were quick to follow. The «*Celestina*» was a typical product of the Renaissance, and Europe was quick to grasp the fruit of the new learning. Imitation has been termed the sincerest appreciation, and the «*Celestina*» gave rise to a long and honoured list of plays founded upon it. One of these was the interlude «*Calisto and Melibea*» which was first printed in England about 1525.<sup>2)</sup> Over a century later James Mabbe issued his famous rendering of the «*Celestina*», the most exemplary of Tudor translations (London, 1631).

The «*Celestina*» was first put «into English cloathes», and adapted for the stage at a time when the Spanish theologians began to attract notice in England. It is of curious interest that the first Spanish work to be ushered before the English people was not of the choice latinity of Vives, or of the bejewelled language of Guevara, but a work distinguished by the mighty displeasure of the Inquisition.<sup>3)</sup>

«*Calisto and Melibea*», an adaptation of the «*Celestina*», was printed at the time when Juan Luis Vives was reader of rhetoric in the University of Oxford. He had come from Spain with the two-fold recommendations of Sir Thomas More and Erasmus. At Corpus Christi College, from 1523 to 1528 — a period of five years — Vives had made some ardent disciples, who later translated into idiomatic English his moral writings. Sir Thomas Morison, Richard Hynde and Thomas Paynel were of this number.<sup>4)</sup> It was at Bruges in 1523, just before his sojourn in England that Vives published his *De Institutione feminae christiana*, that, although not translated into English until 1540 (by Richard Hynde), had a wide sphere of influ-

<sup>1)</sup> See La Barrera, *Catálogo bibliográfico del teatro antiguo español*. Madrid, 1860, p. 334; Brunet 1, p. 1716ff.

<sup>2)</sup> See Collier, *History of English Dramatic Poetry*, 1830, Vol. II, pp. 408—12; Ward, *Hist. of English Dramatic Literature*, London, 1899, Vol. I, p. 249; Ten Brink, *Hist. of English Literature*, Vol. II, Part II. Translated by L. Dora Schmitz, New York, 1896, p. 144.

<sup>3)</sup> See *Spanish Literature in the England of the Tudors*, by John Garrett Underhill, New York, The Macmillan Co., 1899 (Columbia University Publications) p. 89 et seq. The Bibliography is particularly valuable.

<sup>4)</sup> Mr. Edward Arber in his reprint of the *Revelation of the Monk of Evesham* (London, 1896) p. 3, states that John Letou printed in 1481 The Expositions on the Psalms by John Perez de Valentia. It would appear from this that Perez de Valentia, and not the writer of the «*Celestina*», was the first Spanish author

ence. In this caloric treatise Vives places upon his *index expurgatorius* a work that had been already condemned by the Church, the «*Celestina*». It was about this time that the interlude of «*Calisto and Melibea*» was issued from the press of John Rastell with the following title:

«A new comodye in englysh in maner Of an enterlude ryght  
elygant & full of craft of rethoryk wherein is shewd & dyscrybyd  
as well the bewte & good propertes of women as theyr vycys & euyll  
condicions with a morall conclusion & exhortacyon to vertew.»

The colophon: *Johnes rastell me imprimi fecit, cum privilegio regali* (device). Folio, black letter.<sup>1)</sup>

The only copy that has come down to us is preserved in the Malone Collection in the Bodleian Library. It was first re-printed by Mr. W. Carew Hazlitt in his edition of Dodsley.<sup>2)</sup>

It has been suggested that, from the wording of the colophon, John Rastell was the author of the interlude.<sup>3)</sup> That Rastell was a publisher of moral plays there can be no doubt — the '*Nature of the Four Elements*' was from his press — but there is nothing to indicate his authorship of «*Calisto and Melibea*». We know from Bale that Rastell was a citizen of London and married the sister of Sir Thomas More, the friend of Vives. He died in 1536. He was a printer of merit, no less than thirty-one works having been issued by him.<sup>4)</sup> The 'me imprimi fecit' means that Rastell was the publisher, and not the author, of the interlude. It is much more probable that one of the pupils of Vives was the maker of it, for has not the English adaptator made a moral interlude out of the picaresque «*Celestina*»? Perhaps the author recognized the singular, even vicious, power of the original and sought to better it by adding «the ex-

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to have a hearing in England. The book however was not by him but by Thomas Wallensis, an English dominican of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Mr. Lionel Cust informs me that the *Expositiones super Psalterium* of Perez was first printed in 1484 or three years after John Lettou printed the Commentary by Wallensis (See articles Lettou and Wallensis in the *Dictionary of Nat. Biog.*).

<sup>1)</sup> See '*A List of English Plays*', by Walter Wilson Greg, London, for the Bibliographical Society, 1900, p. 138.

<sup>2)</sup> *A Select Collection of Old English Plays*, London, 1874, Vol. I.

<sup>3)</sup> Warton, *History of English Poetry*, London 1840, Vol. II, 513.

<sup>4)</sup> See Ames' *Typographical Antiquities*, ed. Herbert, I, 326, *seq.* Mr. E. Gordon Duff, in *Dict. Nat. Biog.*, art. Rastell, contends with small success that Rastell was the author of the '*Nature of the Four Elements*'. Cf. Warton's *History of English Poetry*, Vol. II, p. 513, note (before cited).

hortacyon to vertew». He certainly ruined it beyond all hope of repair in the minds of the moderns, but when the Tudors reigned didacticism was the fashion, and it is no wonder that the «*Celestina*», with its unswerving realism, or, as Mabbe expressed it, its «coorse and sowre bread» appeared unsavory to the English.

The *dramatis personae* is, of course, lacking in the original, and it is here constructed from a reading of the interlude.

Calisto, in love with Melibea,  
Danio (Pleberio), father of Melibea,  
Sempronio, a parasite,  
Parmeno, servant to Calisto,  
Melibea, daughter of Danio,  
Celestina, an old bawd,  
Crito,  
Elicia,  
Areusa.

The last three, unlike the Spanish, do not take part in the action, but are introduced into the dialogue. The English author, perhaps, recognized the limitations of the stage (or platform) and thought it was not large enough to admit of a greater number of persons, or of one actor taking more than one part, not uncommon in the interludes of the time. Pleberio, the father of Melibea in the «*Celestina*», becomes Danio in the adaptation. This is the only change in the *personae*.

One cannot but notice, when glancing over these names, the unique position they occupy in the history of English dramatic literature. Although it has not been recognized before, this is the first time in England that the usual Christian names are applied to the characters, and not vague abstractions. We do not here find Knowledge, Everyman, Free Will, Imagination, Vice, and all the others that go to make up the machinery of the moralities. The ever present Pardoner, the Friar, the Husband, each representing an individual class, do not find a place in «*Calisto*». The allegory, the abstractions have all vanished. The three unities are preserved in the interlude, a further evidence of the author's knowledge of the structure of the drama.

The opening lines of this «new comodye in englysh» are decorated with quotations from the classics and the great humanist, Petrarch, and are lifted directly from the original, where they appear in the prologue.<sup>1)</sup>

<sup>1)</sup> From this it is evident that in «*Calisto and Melibea*» the adaptator used, not the earlier editions, but the one dated Seville, 1502, or a later one. This was the first edition to contain the prologue.

See Foulché-Delbosc p. 48.

The adaptator, evidently, was as much attracted to the learning of the ancients as was Fernando de Rojas (if he indeed be the author), and he displayed it with almost as great pride. He refrains from giving them in Latin, the English translation answering his purpose. This, however, was a vice of the age. It was, like all the works of the Renaissance, influenced by the classics, and the author of it could not refrain from indulging in a cold display of learning.

A parallel is here given to show the care with which the learned clerk of England transcribed his original.

“*Calisto and Melibea.*”

(Melibea enters:)

Franciseus Petrarcus, the poet laureate,  
Saith that Nature, which is mother of all things,  
Without strife can give life to nothing create;  
And Heraclitus, the wise clerk, in his writing,  
Saith in all things create strife is their working.<sup>1)</sup>

“*Celestina.*” (Prologue.)

Todas las cosas ser criadas á manera de contienda ó batalla, dice aquel gran sabio Heráclito, en el modo: *Omnia secundum litem fiunt.*

Halle esta sentencia corroborado por aquel gran orador y poeta laureado, Francisco Petrarca, diciendo: *sine lite atque offensione nihil genuit natura parens: Sin lid y ofension ninguno cosa engendio natura, madre de todo.*<sup>2)</sup>

Dr. Brandl thinks that the references to Petrarch, Heraclitus and Poppaea, Alexander, Hector and Narcissus that occur later in the interlude indicate that «*Calisto and Melibea*» is an early example of the school-drama (*Schuldramen*). These names, however, are all taken from the «*Celestina*» and are not at all original with the English author.<sup>3)</sup>

The story is a condensed version of only the first four acts of the «*Celestina*». The ending is utterly unlike the Spanish. In one case we have a true tragedy ending in the death of all the principal characters. In the other the tragic impulse is nipped in the bud, the heroine being saved by a clumsy subterfuge from the fate that the author of the «*Celestina*», so terribly true to life, makes Melibea undergo.

<sup>1)</sup> Hazlitt's *Dodsley*, I, p. 53.

<sup>2)</sup> La *Celestina*, *Bib. de Autores Espanoles*. (Madrid, Rivadeneyra, 1876), Vol. III, p. 2.

<sup>3)</sup> *Quellen des Weltlichen Dramas in England vor Shakespeare*. Herausgegeben von Alois Brandl. Straßburg, Trübner, 1897 (in *Quellen und Forschungen* Vol. LXXX).

In the English we have the passion of Calisto for Melibea expressed with some of the strength of the original. Calisto, not being able to approach Melibea, is in the throes of despair, and Sempronio, his servant and parasite, suggests that he employ the offices of Celestina. This is effected, the bawd driving a sharp bargain with the tempestuous lover. She secures the friendship of Melibea and proceeds at once to use upon her the cunning, the subtle logic, the keen knowledge of dialectics that she has practiced in many a like emprise. She succeeds in obtaining from her a girdle which she bears at once to Calisto. Thus far the plot has been the same as its more celebrated prototype. Here the resemblance ends. Danio, the father of Melibea, has had a terrible dream — he has seen in his sleep a foul monster speaking to his daughter, that, «leaping and fawning upon her,» tries to beguile her into a loathsome pit. This monster is, of course, Celestina. Melibea, recognizing the application to herself, confesses, and after having assured her parent that she has not taken the final step, asks his forgiveness. The play ends with a long commendation by Danio in praise of virtue and obedience.

This unexpected change in the action, so unlike the Castilian, has irrevocably lost to us what might have been a great play. The murder of Celestina, the death of the lovers, the failure to comply with poetic justice did not agree with the nice sense of ethics of its rugged English author. The catastrophe did not appeal to him, and the Senecan climax was not to his taste. Instead of the wonderful tragical ending of Celestina, he has given us a poor substitute, — a moral exhortation to virtue. The adaptator, so original in many ways, so far in advance of his time, stopped at the threshold. And yet it would have been almost beyond precedent if he had crossed the bounds and given us the «Celestina» as he found it. Bearing upon it the frown of the Church, — this might alone have deterred him. But there is a more potent reason. The «Celestina» was three hundred years in advance of its epoch. Mr. Fitzmaurice-Kelly goes so far as to compare it to the work of a modern of the moderns, — Guy de Maupassant! It is no wonder that the author, whoever he might be, failed to grasp the stern realities of a book that has flourished through four centuries, its vitality unimpaired, the qualities that make it what it is, to be appreciated now rather than in the reign of Henry VIII, when Vives denounced it as pernicious and not to be read by the faithful. The adaptator might have viewed it in still another light, a more heinous one in literary usage. He perhaps recognized the wickedness of the

«*Celestina*» and tried to re-work it, to make it as exemplary in morals as it was in letters.<sup>1)</sup> «The pessimistic conception of life,» says Ten Brink, «upon which the whole presentation is based was opposed to his moral feeling, the very earnestness and persistency exhibited by the Spanish poets in the treatment of so dismal a subject may have gone against the grain with him.»<sup>2)</sup>

In some respects the English version is an advance upon the Spanish. The «*Celestina*», with its twenty-one acts, was so long that it could not be put upon the stage, the first act alone being as long as some plays. Where Rojas has put unwieldy speeches in the mouths of his characters, the English author has short, flowing sentences. An acting play has been made out of a dramatic composition. To do this some of the minor characters have been suppressed, mere mention being made of them in the dialogue (see supra p. 48). In the adaptation of the first four *jornadas* of the «*Celestina*» the essentials have been, in every case, preserved.

Not only does the complete doing away with the abstractions and allegory in «*Calisto and Melibea*» mark a great advance in stage-craft, but the language and diction presage, in equal measure, the newer drama. Until the time of Greene we do not find a scene like the one between Calisto and Sempronio, when the latter suggests the services of the bawd. «*Ralph Roister Doister*», considered to be the first «regular» English comedy, cannot be compared to it in the fluency or strength of its diction.

Calisto thus appeals to his servant:

*Cal.* O, Sempronio, have pity on my distress,  
For of all creatures I am the woefullest.

*Sem.* How so? What is the cause of your unrest?

*Cal.* For I serve in love to the goodliest thing  
That is or ever was.

*Sem.* What is she?

<sup>1)</sup> This was attempted by Lavardin in his celebrated French version: *La Celestine fidellement répurgée (des plusiers endroits scandaleux qui pouvoient offenser les religieuses oreilles et y adioustant du sien)* par Jacq. de Lavardin. Paris, 1577. — See Puibusque, Adolphe de, *Histoire Comparée des littératures espagnole et française*, Paris 1843; I, p. 478; also Brunet, Vol. I, p. 1721.

<sup>2)</sup> Ten Brink, Vol. II, part II, 143.

*Cal.* It is one which is all other exceeding  
The picture of angels, if thou her see:  
Phoebus or Phoebe no comparison may be  
To her. — — —

Oh, what woeful wight with me may compare!  
The thirst of sorrow in my mixed wine,  
Which daily I drink with deep draughts of care.<sup>1)</sup>

The last two lines are especially note-worthy. The following shows the advance in the structure of the dialogue:

*Cal.* (continuing) What counsel can rule him, Sempronio,  
That keepeth in him no order of counsel?

*Sem.* Ah, is this Calisto? his fire now I know well;  
How that love over him hath cast her net,  
In whose perseverance is all inconstancy.

*Cal.* Why, is not Elisaeus' love and thine met?

*Sem.* What then?

*Cal.* Why reprovest me then of ignorance?

*Sem.* For thou settest man's dignity in obeisance  
To the imperfection of the weak woman.

*Cal.* A woman? Nay, a god of goddesses.

*Sem.* Believest that then?

*Cal.* Yea, and as a goodness I here confess;  
And I believe there is no such sovereign  
In heaven, though she be in earth.

*Sem.* Peace, peace;  
A woman a god! Nay, to God, a villain!<sup>2)</sup>

And when speaking of the follies of women:

*Sem.* What trimming, what painting to make fairness!  
Their false intents and flickering smiling.<sup>3)</sup>

The last sentence is unique, — it is so different from the usual language of the moralities. The speech of Calisto when describing

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<sup>1)</sup> Hazlitt's Dodsley, I, pp. 56—57.

<sup>2)</sup> Ibid. p. 59.

<sup>3)</sup> Ibid. p. 60 ff.

the charms of Melibeas has not its equal in English theatrical literature until the decade just preceding Shakespeare's apprenticeship. The poetic spirit is not wanting. It must be understood, however, that all the comparisons are relative and that the interlude was written about 1525 when Skelton was the foremost poet of England.

*Cal.* Behold her nobleness, her ancient lineage,  
Her great patrimony, her excellent wit,  
Her resplendent virtue, her portly courage,  
Her godly grace, her sovereign beauty perfit!  
No tongue is able well to express it.  
And yet, I pray thee, let me speak awhile,  
Myself to refresh in rehearsing of my style.  
I begin at her hair, which is so goodly,  
Crisped to her heels, tied with fine lace,  
Far shining beyond fine gold of Araby!  
I trow the sun colour to it may give place;  
That who to behold it might have the grace  
Would say in comparison nothing countervails —

— — —  
Her gay glassing eyes so fair and bright;  
Her brows, her nose in a mean no fashion fails;  
Her mouth proper andfeat, her teeth small and white,  
Her lips ruddy, her body straight upright;  
Her little teats to the eye is a pleasure.  
Oh, what joy it is to see such a figure!  
Her skin of whiteness endarketh the snow  
With rose-colour ennewed. I thee ensure  
Her little hands in mean manner, — this no trow —  
Her fingers small and long, with nails ruddy; most pure  
Of proportion none such in portraiture,  
Without peer: worthy to have for fairness  
The apple that Paris gave Venus the goodness.<sup>1)</sup>

The interludes of Heywood, superior as they are in many respects, do not contain or even suggest the minuteness, the intensity and the consistency of characterization of «Calisto and Melibeas». Although not so pronounced there is also the realism, analysis and the subtle pleading of the original, especially in the scene where Celestina appeals to Melibeas, who rebukes her sharply, but is finally overcome by the vigor of her logic alone. Here the action is decidedly dramatic and it is well sustained to the end. Ten Brink and Prof. Ward have noticed the skill with which the dramatic situations are handled. The

<sup>1)</sup> *Ibid.* p. 61 ff.

*gracioso*, or comic character, used in the older Spanish drama and which later became stereotyped in Calderon's plays, is here represented in the servant of Calisto, Sempronio, who employs the coarse wit of the time.

How the adaptator made use of his material is also of value. From a reading of the interlude one would never suspect that Spain had furnished the original. It has been completely «Englished» even to the very rhyme in which it is written. The pedantries of the «*Celestina*» have generally been omitted. Good old English expressions are used in their stead. The pithy epigrams that have made the Spanish a kind of quotation-book for later writers<sup>1)</sup> have been, in many cases preserved in the English version.<sup>2)</sup>

The first play in our literature that was influenced by foreign dramatic ideals was also this old adaptation of the «*Celestina*». When we consider what an eminent following the comedies and tragedies after the Italian manner had (later) in England, it is important that the first product of foreign influence was not of Italian, but of Spanish origin. «*Calisto and Melibea*» denotes the rise of the romantic comedy, it being the first to contain the elements of romanticism that flourished vigorously a half-century later and reached its culmination in Shakespeare. It was revived, in fact, during this movement (1582). Shakespeare's romantic comedy, *All's Well That Ends Well*, is distantly related to the «*Celestina*». Shakespeare made use of the *Decameron*, Day III, novel 9, as given by Paynter in his *Palace of Pleasure*, Vol. I, nov. 38. The story is also found in Accolti's *Virginia* (1513) which came within the sphere of influence of the «*Celestina*».<sup>3)</sup> Thus indirectly the old Spanish play affected Shakespeare and the romantic drama in England. *Virginia* by Accolti was unknown to the English, although Prof. Ward conjectures that «it might have been brought to England by the Italian actors who were in this country in 1577-8».<sup>4)</sup>

<sup>1)</sup> See *La Celestina, por Jabier Soravilla*, Madrid, Hernandez, 1895. This contains a list of the 'maximas, pensamientos y sentencias' of the «*Celestina*».

<sup>2)</sup> Mr. W. Carew Hazlitt was of the opinion that many of the folksayings in the interlude were of English origin. They might have been current in England, but the English poet took them directly from the Spanish. See Hazlitt's *Dodsley*, Vol. I, p. 81, where the reference is made to Brand's *Popular Antiquities of Great Britain*, 1870, III, 317, — the quotation «The unicorn humbleth himself to a maid» may be found in the «*Celestina*», Act IV, 'come se dice de unicornio que se humilla á cualquiera doncella'.

<sup>3)</sup> Klein, *Geschichte des italienischen Dramas*, Vol. I, p. 590, seq.

<sup>4)</sup> Ward, Vol. II, p. 119.

The first influence, however, of romanticism in the English drama was direct and at first hand.

When the English poet made his rendering of the *Celestina*, did he make use of a Spanish text or an Italian translation? At the time the Spanish language was hardly known in England, the interlude itself being the first product of Spanish literature. When it was published, England had an extensive commercial, as well as social, intercourse with Italy and had already received from it the quickening impulses of the Renaissance. The nobles sent their sons to Italy to be educated, rarely, if ever, to Spain. Use could have been made of three translations, in Italian, in French and in German. As early as 1505 there was issued at Venice an Italian translation by Ordoñez, the first of a long line of Tuscan renderings. Another edition appeared at Rome the year following, but it was immediately confiscated by the authorities.<sup>1)</sup> The German version, *Ain Hipsche Tragedia von zwaien liebabendn mentschen*, etc., was published at Augsburg in 1520.<sup>2)</sup> It is extremely improbable that this translation was employed. The French was 'translate d'ytalie' and dated at Paris, 1527 — probably too late to have been of use to the English adaptator. The exclamation, *Dieu garde* (p. 56, line 10), occurring early in the English play, leaves it to be inferred that a French version was its source. It would be well to compare the passage with the first French translation, but it is inaccessible. The exclamation *Dieu garde* is one in general use and in itself does not indicate a direct borrowing.<sup>3)</sup>

<sup>1)</sup> Other editions, Milan, 1514, 1515; Venice 1515, 1519, 1525, cf. Brunet I, 1723 ff. The edition of Milan, 1514, agrees with the Seville edition of 1501.

<sup>2)</sup> For influence of the *Celestina* in Germany see *Spaniens Anteil an der Deutschen Litteratur des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts* by Dr. Adam Schneider, Straßburg, 1898, p. 277 seq. V. Ferdinand Wolf, *Über die Celestina*, in the *Blätter für literarische Unterhaltung* 1845 and *Studien*, p. 289.

<sup>3)</sup> Other French translations (before 1530) Lyon, 1529; Paris 1529. See Brunet, *ibid.* p. 1721.

The expression *Dieu garde* does not occur in any of the early French translations in the British Museum. The passage in the edition of 1542 reads:

*Cal.* Sempronio, Sempronio, Où est ce maudit?

*Semp.* Je suis icy, monseigneur, pensant de vos chevaux.

In the *Celestina*, Paris (1578) the servant's name is *Malican* (for Sempronio) and the dialogue:

*Cal.* Malican? Malican? Malican? Où sera ce malheureux?

*Mal.* Me voicy, Monsieur, qui garde ces chevaux.

The adaptator need not have gone to Spain to have procured a Spanish text, although numerous embassies were sent to Spain during the reigns of Henry VII and Henry VIII. Three editions of the «*Celestina*» in Spanish were published in Italy before 1530 (Milan, 1514; Venice 1515 and 1525). It could, therefore, have been quite accessible in Italy as well as in Spain. It is extremely probable that in «*Calisto and Melibea*» a Spanish text, but one printed in Italy, was employed. There is no reason, except the one given above, why the book could not have come direct from Spain, although Italian books were appreciated in England long before the first appearance of Spain in the field of English letters. Italy offered the excellent translations of Ordoñez and Imolese, but the English conforms most to the Castilian, and the conclusion is inevitable that the dramatist went directly to the original.<sup>1)</sup>

The history of «*Calisto and Melibea*» does not end with its publication by Rastell. It had more enduring qualities. It was probably acted at Court or before an assemblage of nobles prior to being put into printed form. We know that during the reign of Henry VIII the great houses supported players of interludes (*interludentes*) who devised the pageants and masques that were given in honor of the King during his «progresses». Henry himself took an active interest in them. He had his own company known as «*The King's Players*». Calisto, in the interlude, when about to go off the stage, turns to the audience and says:

My message shall return by my servant Sempronio.

Thus farewell, my lords, for a while I will go.<sup>2)</sup>

(Exit)

From this it is inferred that the play was acted before members of the nobility, perhaps at Court, or Calisto would not have addressed them as «my lords». It is a deliberate attempt to interest the auditors in the action of the play, — much in the manner in which the actors, in later time, appealed to the gallants who were seated upon the stage.

How long the play, in its older form, continued to be acted is not known. The records are silent upon the point. In 1580, however,

<sup>1)</sup> Mr. J. G. Underhill, *Sp. Literature in the England of the Tudors*, p. 375 (before cited) is of the opinion that it was adapted through the Italian of Ordoñez. There is nothing to prove this contention.

<sup>2)</sup> Hazlitt's Dodsley, p. 64. — Doch vgl. die ständige Anrede *lords, lordinges* an das Publikum in älteren volkstümlichen Dichtungen. (W. K.)

there was an attack made upon it by one who took part in the stage-polemics of the day. In the *Second and Third Blast of Retraite from Plaies and Theaters* it was thus weighed in the balance by its Puritan author.

«The nature of these Comedies are, for the most part, after one manner of nature, like the tragical Comedie of Calistus, where the bawdresse Scelestina<sup>1)</sup> enflamed the maiden Melibea with her sorceries. Do we not use in these discourses to counterset witchcraft charmed drinks & amorous potions, thereby to drawe the affections of men, & stir them up into lust, to like euen those whom of them-selues they abhor.»<sup>2)</sup>

The interlude no doubt had undergone a change since the days of the Tudors. It may have been re-modelled — it surely must have been lengthened, for the older play has the proportions of an interlude. That it was «in one manner of nature» describes the *Celestina* exactly. The climax was probably altered, although the «sorceries» of the bawd are contained in the earlier production. The «tragical comedie of Calistus» must have been a prominent play at the time or the author of the *Second and Third Blast* would not have pointed it out as an example. That it was still a comedy and not a tragedy seems to be inferred, although the terms tragedy, comedy and tragicomedy were used very loosely by the playwrights of the time.<sup>3)</sup>

The following is probably a reference to the *Celestina* and its adaptation. It is from Gosson's *'Playes Confuted'* and the term «bawdy comedie» was peculiarly adapted to it. It was published in 1581.

«I may boldly say it because I have seene it, that the Palace of pleasure, the Golden Asse, the Aethiopian historie, Amadis of France, the Rounde table, *baudie Comedies*, in Latine, French, Italian and *Spanish*, have been thoroughly ransackt to furnish the Playe houses in London.<sup>4)</sup>

<sup>1)</sup> It is curious to note that the English author unconsciously imitated Vanegas de Busto who, in a ripe spirit of mockery, called it the *'Scelestina'*.

<sup>2)</sup> Reprinted in the *English Drama and Stage under the Stuart and Tudor Princes* (edited by W. Carew Hazlitt) Roxborough Library, 1869; p. 143.

<sup>3)</sup> In 1578 Thomas Lupton called his play, *All for Money*, both a Tragedy and a Comedy! See Collier, Vol. II, p. 417.

<sup>4)</sup> «Playes Confuted in five Actions, Proving they are not to be suffered in a christian commenweale, by the waye of both the Cavils of Thomas Nast,» etc. *English Drama and Stage*, p. 189.

The quotation is of value in that it shows that the dramatists of the age of Elizabeth drew their materials from Spanish sources, and Spanish dramas in particular. Stephen Gosson, who made the statement, was a playwright himself and knew of what he spoke.

Two years after the mention of it in the *Second and Third Blast* it was produced in London by Lord Hunsdon's Company before the Court:

«1582. Dec. 27. A Comedy of Beauty and Housewifery on St. John's day by the Lord Hunsdon's servants».<sup>1)</sup>

Mr. Fleay identifies this as a later form of «Calisto and Melibea». The short-title of the interlude — «The Beauty and Good Properties of Women», used in Rastell's edition, is similar to the «Comedy of Beauty and Housewifery» produced by Lord Hunsdon. As the play was produced a few years before (in 1580), the supposition is a reasonable one.

The «Celestina» has the distinction of being the first play to be published or announced for publication in the Spanish language in England. On February 24, 1591, there was entered in the Stationers' Registers to the account of John Wolf by «Master Hartwell and the wardens A booke entituled Lacelestina Comedia in Spanishe». No copy of the work thus entered is known to exist. The wide popularity of the «Celestina» in England is nowhere better attested than by this announcement of its publication in the original Castilian.

On October 5. 1598, there was entered for William Aspley, «of the Tygers Head in Saint Paul's Church-yard» a license to print what is evidently a new translation of the «Celestina». It probably has reference to a complete version of the Spanish and not to a mutilated form of it. It might be a regular play for the term «booke» denotes a drama as well as what properly comes under that appellation. Thus Shakespeare's plays are entered in the Stationers' Registers as books. The title-page corresponds so well with the Spanish that it was probably a literal translation. It was never printed.

«Entered for his (Aspley's) copie under the handes of master Samuel Harsnett, and the wardens, a booke entituled the tragick comedye of Celestina wherein are discoursed in most pleasant stile manye Philosophicall sentences and advertisements verye necessarye

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<sup>1)</sup> See Fleay, *Hist. of the Stage*, p. 29; *Chronicle*, Vol. II, p. 290.

for younge gentlemen Discoveringe the sleights of treacherous servantes and the subtile carriages of filthye bawdes.»<sup>1)</sup>

The Title of the «*Celestina*» (Seville, 1501, and later) is —

«*Comedia de Calisto y Melibea* — la qual contiene demas de su agradable y dulce estilo muchas sentencias filosofales e avisos muy necessarios para mancebos, mostrandoles los engaños que estan encerrados en siruientes y alcahuetas.»

The short-title, «*Celestina*» was first used, in Spanish, in the edition published at Alcalá, 1569. The English translator used this and not the older title of «*Calisto and Melibea*.» This proves conclusively that the edition announced in 1598 was in no way connected with the interlude, when the title «*Celestina*» was unknown.<sup>2)</sup> This translation was the immediate forerunner of the one by James Mabbe (1572—1642?), the best of all translations.

Don Diego Puede-Ser, as Mabbe liked to be known, had lived in Spain for two years as secretary of the embassy under Sir John Digby. In 1623 he published a translation of «*Guzman de Alfarache*» under the title of «*The Rogue*». Seven years later a license was issued to Raph Mabb, the translator's brother, for «a play called the Spanish Bawde.<sup>3)</sup> An excellent reprint has been made of Mabbe's version, edited with an introduction by Mr. James Fitzmaurice-Kelly.<sup>4)</sup> «In the diffusion,» says Mr. Fitzmaurice-Kelly, «of its lesson of loyalty to truth, to life and to distinction of form, no man, in the measure given to a translator, has played a braver part than its admiring lover, Don Diego Puede-Ser. Much of the vigor, the passion

<sup>1)</sup> Arber's *Transcript of the Stationers' Registers*, Vol. III, p. 42.

<sup>2)</sup> See Salvá, *Catálogo*, 1, No. 1165. A translation, however, bore this title before the one of Alcalá. The one published at Venice in 1519, «*traducta de lingua castigliana en italiano idioma*,» was really the first edition to use the title now generally employed. See Foulché-Delbosc, p. 35, Note. In 1598 there was also published Bartholemew Yong's englising of the «*Diana* of Montemayor as well as translations by L. A. of the «*Mirrour of Knighthood*» and «*Don Belianis de Grecia*», — these, together with the «*Celestina*», make the year a notable one in the history of Spanish letters in England.

<sup>3)</sup> Arber's *Transcript*, Vol. IV, p. 812. Licensed Feby. 27, 1630. The book, issued in 1631, was entitled: «*The Spanish Bawd Represented in Celestina or the Tragick-Comedy of Calisto and Melibea* wherein is contained, besides the pleasantnesse and sweetnesse of the stile, many philosophicall sentences, and profitable instructions necessary for the younger sort, showing the deceits and subtilties housed in the besomes of false servants and cunny-catching Bawds»

<sup>4)</sup> London, David Nutt, 1894. In Tudor translations edited by W. E. Henley, VI.

the fire of Rojas, much of the *gravitas et probitas* which stirred Barth's transports, is successfully transfused in his copy; and if its colours be not in all respects the same as his original's, they are of uncommon brilliancy and beauty.» Mabbe's «Spanish Bawd Represented in Celestina» was a fitting climax to the labours of his predecessors. Over one hundred years had elapsed since the great Spanish romance was first given to the English people.

In the foregoing the following conclusions have been reached:

- I The interlude of *Calisto* and *Melibea* is the first play in English dramatic literature that is indebted to a foreign (continental) source.
- II. It is the first monument of the contact of English and Spanish literature.
- III. It is the first drama to be influenced by the literature of Spain.
- IV. It is the first play that marks the beginning of the romantic comedy in England.
- V. It is the first to suppress the allegory of the moralities.
- VI. It is the first to suppress the abstract qualities.
- VII. It is the first in which customary names are given to the characters. The names represent individuals and not classes.
- VIII. In diction and in laguage it is far in advance of its epoch.

Despite the above important qualities the interlude of «*Calisto* and *Melibea*» has received but meagre treatment in the histories of our dramatic literature. Its splendid isolation in the waste of moralities has not been sufficiently recognized. It is an exotic, it is true, and no direct influence can be traced to it.<sup>1)</sup> The primary qualities it possesses, however, make it all-important in the eyes of the student. The interlude contains every element of the regular drama with but one exception, and that of least importance — length. The subject of the play is one of vital interest, the relations between man and woman, verging on the problem drama of our own day, and as different as can be from the hackneyed subjects of moralities. The use of the words, «a new comodye», as set forth upon its title-page is of rare significance. It is, perhaps, the first use of the term «comedy» as applied to a play produced in England. Did the author mean that it was simply a «new» comedy in the sense that it was not an old one re-issued, or did he mean that it was «new» in that

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<sup>1)</sup> Dr. J. E. Spingarn has written an article on the *Influence of the Celestina on John Lyly*, which, it is hoped, will soon be published.

it was unlike in construction and subject-matter to the moralities that had gone before it? The preservation of the three dramatic unities in «Calisto and Melibea» make it especially noteworthy in the literature of this period.

The fresh elements in its make-up caused the interlude to be played when the moral plays of the time, not abreast with the advance in dramatic construction, were laid aside and forgotten. It saw the rise of «Gammer Gurton's Needle» and of «Gorboduc», and also witnessed their decline.

It contained the vital elements of the newer drama, and hence it endured when the moralities were given up. So sturdy, so vigorous was it that over a half-century after publication, it was presented before the Court and was important enough to be honored by the censure of the Puritans.

Length, then, is the only draw-back to the interlude being termed a «regular» play. It has, and it cannot be denied, the proportions of an interlude, but it resembles an interlude in nothing else. It is regular in all other attributes. It cannot be classed as a morality, because the elements that distinguish the moralities — the allegory and the abstractions — are wholly absent from it. «Ralph Roister Doister» is, in one respect, not as far advanced in structure, the *Miles Gloriosus*, etc. being types, representations of a class, while in the interlude, Calisto, Melibea, Pleberio and the others are the names of individuals. It is therefore «regular» in everything but length. It was issued thirty-five years before the first so-called English comedy. It here follows that a ninth conclusion must be added to the number given above.

IX. *Calisto and Melibea* is the first play in the English drama to contain all the essentials of the regular drama with but one exception, and of least importance, — that of dimension.

This alone is sufficient to make it of primary significance in the rise and development of the English drama.<sup>1)</sup>

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<sup>1)</sup> D. Serrano y Sanz's *Noticias biográficas de Fernando de Rojas* and M. Foulché-Delbosc's reprint of the first edition of the «*Celestina*» appeared after this paper was written.

Vgl. über den Gegenstand jetzt W. Fehse, Christof Wirsungs deutsche *Celestina*-übersetzungen. Dissertation, Halle 1902, wo p. 68—73 über die «*Celestina*» in England gehandelt ist, sowie die Besprechung dieser Arbeit von Farinelli, Deutsche Litteraturzeitung 1902, p. 2791. (W. K.)







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